

Notes for a Critique to the Program of the Sociology of Emotions

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Abstract

This work elaborates a critique of the current program of the sociology of emotions that is located in the conceptual space around the definition of society. This impacts on the good development of concepts such as social interaction and cognition, fundamental to think about the role of the social in the emotional and emotional life of the subjects, in turn affecting the development of the sociology of emotions program which currently results incomplete and insufficient to explain the relationship between emotion, individual and society.

Keywords

sociology of emotions; social reality; social interaction; cognition; significance



I. Introduction

The sociology of emotions is inscribed within the so-called affective turn and inaugurates the sociological analysis from the perspective of emotions and affects, incorporating the body in the study of the social. This is a success because it demonstrates the weight of the body-sensitive in individual and social human action, although it suggests inaccuracies that need to be corrected. These inaccuracies are due to two fundamental reasons: the first is the low interdisciplinary stance of said program with respect to the natural sciences (biology and neurosciences, in particular); and the second is related to the dominant tradition in sociological studies that privileges an idea of society as a given structure, without historicity, and also, just for that reason, without subjects in the full extent of the concept. This disrupts the understanding of the emotion-society relationship and also fails to think about the way in which emotions operate socially from the body that feels them in the constitution of the social. This text will echo in the second of these reasons.

As the sociology of emotions studies the emotional and affective dimension of social life, its antecedents are based on what is known as the "affective turn."¹ Lara and Enciso (2013) place this turn from the theoretical urgency that emerged in the 80's around the emotionalization of public life, pointing out as pioneers the works of Massumi (1995) and Sedwick and Frank (1995) on the insufficiency of the discursive turn in Social Sciences, as well as that of Greco and Stenner (2008) on the role of emotions in the transformation of social life, particularly the great interest of these authors in understanding affections

¹ According to Arfuch (2016), the affective turn owes its origin to a growing trend towards the subjectivation initiated in the 80's along with the emergence of postmodern thinking that gave relevance to the experience and the "little" story, the proliferation of identities collective, the erasure of the borders between the private and the public, and the correlation that all this accused to inaugurate an ontology of the difference. This also represented a rejection reaction to the textual or discursive turn. And this is a mistake. Let us see, as separate from the emotional condensation, nor the way in which they opt socially from their nature.

as a corporeal phenomenon, pre-conscious and pre-individual².

Although all this served as a basis to make the emotion-affect relationship³ the core of the sociology of emotions program, the problem with these works - and others that have been omitted here due to space issues - is that they do not repair the The need to ask what an emotion is, how it operates in the body and how from there it relates to affection and meaning on the social level.

It is based on the fact that it is quite possible that the Durkhemian approach to society - dominant in sociological studies - is behind this problem because it leaves intact a core of fundamental analysis for the sociology of emotions: subjective experience. And the problem is compounded by understanding that although this experience sets the focus of sensory studies, the truth is that the weak presence of phenomenological, cognitive and neurobiological positions reduces heuristic potential to their developments. Thus, starting from the fact that the social is a "fact" (something given by itself and autonomous) ends up becoming independent from the social of the individuals that configure it through their agency. That is why it is proposed to briefly question the dominance and the practically axiomatic character of Durkheim's sociology in the Social Sciences.

The French sociologist understands society as more than the sum of its parts and that is correct, but only partially, because it prevents us from seeing that in this "set of positively verifiable facts" the movement of human action, given essentially by the Emotional-emotional springs of the individuals in interaction. In Durkhemian sociology, perception and subjective action are essentially outside sociological analysis⁴ because society is a determining structure that in turn determines. That is why Durkheim's sociology does not allow us to understand that the human being is not only constrained by reality, but also participates in its construction (Zemelman, 2004).

Trovero (2013) points out that Durkheim intends to explain the social by the social, giving society a real and external existence to the individual. This coincides with the opinion of Portantiero (1977, p. 26) that Durkhemian society is objective as long as it is "above" individual consciences, that is, above the psychological reality of individuals⁵, vitalizing thus a conception of society as coercion.

² In this kind of struggle against the discursive perspectives in the analysis of the social-cultural, you can also find the work of Clough and Halley (2007) of Spinozian roots and from where from the legacy of Whitehead's studies on the experience triggers more radical approaches to the emotional turn as the work of Stenner and Moreno (2013) and another that continues a line of work hand in hand with Damasio (2000, 2015a, 2015b, 2016) and LeDoux (1996), closer to the approach of the affections by means of the neurosciences. Examples of this are the work of Papollias and Callard (2010) and those of Brennan (2004), Blackman (2010), Hollway (2008) and Gibbs (2010), although these last three enroll better in the line of psychoanalysis. You can also see the work of Gregg (2006) and Gregg and Seigworth (2010) and of course that of Michel de Certeau (1999), which is one of the main influences of these authors. There are also the works of Thrift (2004) and MacComack (2004), and that of Wetherell (2012) that appeals to the meeting between affection and emotion, an important aspect and little considered in the previous works.

³ We owe this opening to the work of Barbalet (2001) since sociology and Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990) since anthropology. The work of Ahmed (2004) and Berlant (2011) are also obligatory referents, opening with Hochschild (1975), Mac Carthy (1989) and Mathews (1992) a properly sociological line of thought, represented by Kemper (1990) and Collins (1990).

⁴ This is due to the search for constants to explain the functioning of society, which inaugurated a sociological episteme focused on the study of the mechanisms of domination and subordination from the study of social control and its self-regulatory management. Thus, sociology bequeathed to social analysis a structural and ahistorical imprint in its foundations, which ended up making a vision of society prevail as something given, practically static and relatively autonomous, also canceling the potential for transforming action of the subjects, beyond that which allowed the social structure in it.

⁵ This postulates society as an autonomous entity, given, practically autopoietic, self-produced, but without the intervention of subjectivity. Durkheim himself (2003, p. 20) says so in these terms: social phenomena have a sui

This is basically the approach that supports research in the field of sociology of emotions; Therefore, although the foregoing could contradict what was said by Mac Carthy (1989) that the sociology of emotions drinks directly from Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology, the truth is that the way of thinking of social reality as a “fact” (at the macro level) it does not doubt (or interfere with) the microsociological approaches mentioned.

In that sense, what was said by Mac Carthy does not prevent us from postulating what is held here: 1) that the sociology of emotions program is based on an idea of society that is insufficient to understand the way in which the social influences the emotional and affective world of individuals, and 2) that for this reason the sociology of emotions program blurs a correct approach to the impact of individual and collective emotions and emotions on the constitution of social reality and vice versa.

II. Review of Literature

The Problem Setting

The origin of the sociology of emotions can be located in the 70s of the twentieth century, with the work of Hochschild (1975). In Kemper's opinion (1990), the emergence of this field⁶ is due to the emergence of new perspectives of analysis that question the linear logic of sociological research based on the analysis of social structures and the demerit of the Self, trying to understand the phenomena emotional as social phenomena (Mac Carthy, 1989, p. 63); but inside there is an open debate from which you can glimpse found positions. This debate is organized around two great theoretical perspectives: the positivist and the antipositivist. The positivist attaches importance to the biological aspects of emotion, but it is marginal and is from which this text starts⁷; and the other, dominant, focuses on emotion as an entirely social construction (Kemper, 1990).

The dominant perspective understands emotion only as socially constructed (Mac Carthy, 1989; and Mathews, 1992), closing the possibility of conceiving it as an internal state of the subject, as it is understood from the marginal position. Specifically Mathews (p. 151) points out that emotion has a double condition: that of being a feeling directed at and caused by social interaction. But these premises are not distinctive in themselves because the marginal position does not deny them in their essence when considering that like any social organism, human biology is oriented to the social relationship of the individual; That is why the existence of social emotions does not cancel the existence of the individual or the way in which they operate socially from their individual nature. The problem is in the way in which

generis existence, as an entity of their own, produced by society itself and not by its parts, by individuals. Trovero (2013) states that in Durkheim society has a cosmic nature. Durkheim's claim is understandable according to the formalizing intentions with which the design of sociological discipline forged, from a strict methodological control that managed to separate the level of the social from the psychological or individual. Durkheim starts here from an idea of indebted science of Comtian positivism of the time, certainly focused on the external, on the observable, because for the author only the facts can configure a properly scientific approach to phenomena (2003, p. 58). For Durkheim, by way of rules for action, the system of norms established by society through its institutions makes it a kind of moral order from which the freedom of association of individuals is constrained (Pontatiero, 1977). That is why the predominant method of analysis in Durkheim is essentially positivist. As Bericat (2000, p. 147) points out, the above does not mean that Durkheim has not considered the presence of affections in society; rather it means that this presence is marginal residual in the conceptual structure of Durkheimian sociology.

⁶ You can debate whether the sociology of emotions is a field or a program. Here it is assumed as a program, but there is a lack of space to account for it. In addition, the debate is irrelevant to the subject at hand.

⁷ Be part of this positioning, but not shared at all. For a matter of space we will not refer to it to focus more attention on the criticism that is the objective of the text.

social interaction is understood. In both positions, social interaction derives from the pre-existing social order (Durkhemian axiom), and that is where the marginal position is stuck and the dominant position is wrong.

Although Bericat (2000) refers to three lines of work within the sociology of emotions (Sociology of emotions with Kemper⁸ ; Sociology with emotions, with Hochschild, Sennet and Collins⁹ ; and Emotions in sociology, with Scheff¹⁰), only the latter moves without questioning the Durkhemian axiom that postulates the dependence of social interaction with respect to social structure. This evidences the absence of a strong recovery of the concepts of experience, perception and subjectivity, which are closely linked to those of emotion and feeling, which are those that could disrupt the starting point of the sociology of emotions to understand in a way broader and more comprehensive relationship between emotion and society.

Even though sociology with emotions and emotions in sociology have allowed themselves to leave the interactionist positions, it has not been possible to evade intrinsic rationalism successfully in the theoretical positions around the theory of exchange, evidencing a lack of recognition of the emotionality-rationality unit (Maturana, 2015) that negatively impacts the way of understanding cognition, since the cognitive is conceived separate from the emotional and this is an error. Let's see.

III. Discussion

3.1 The Emotional-Rationality Unit and Its Impact on Cognition

Emotions are more than a biological absolute, but this does not imply that the biological can be denied or canceled without further ado. Omitting the biological substrate of emotions

⁸ In this line, Theodore Kemper's works are developed within the framework of the forms of socialization, because for the author even recognizing the biological nature of emotions, it is in the social relationship where they emerge. Kemper develops a socio-relational theory of emotions through its concepts of power and status, which gives relevance to the sociological analysis of emotions as it is mostly done today, since from this the social structure is conceived as the unequal distribution of relative positions of power and status, so that this determines the emergence of emotions on the social level, while these are the result of the perception that each subject has of the other in terms of status and power.

⁹ They start from conceiving emotions as conditioned by social norms and the subject both conscious (rational) and sentient (emotional), but they are limited to the conscious feelings that participate in the game of social life. From this perspective, the organicist or biological model of emotions is rejected as well as Goffman's interactionist model in which Kemper focuses. Thus, the analysis of the social factors that unleash an emotion to opt for the analysis of the subjects in the emotional universe is rejected, without denying the articulation of said emotional universe with the conditions of exchange that due to this occur under a social structure determined (Bericat, 2000, p. 159). It is assumed that emotions are oriented to action and cognition, being that their meanings are anchored in context, Eind the Transient Emotions'ca, P d is individual in the configurationconfiguration ortorgaria certainty about social effects benfatizing the existence of a culture emotional that goes from the norms that govern, regulate and control the emotions, going through the social beliefs that are had of them, until arriving at the processes that configure the social sanction in terms of the expression and management of an emotion. This evidences the emotional dimension of ideology.

¹⁰ Scheff's work highlights the way in which feelings define the nature of social ties, thereby rearranging their conceptual approach. As Bericat (2000, p. 151) pointed out, through the analysis of feelings of shame and pride, Scheff insists on the need to rethink the relevance of a new sociology. Scheff's sociological theory of shame (1990, p. 4) starts from the premise that the maintenance of social ties is the most crucial of human motivations, where the basic feelings in the generation of social bonds are shame and Pride. Scheff's work is more linked to the Simmelian postulates than to the Durkhemians, since it emphasizes social ties as the crux of the emergence of the social, via socio-emotional expression. However, in Scheff, Cooley's inheritance, these feelings emerge emotionally after the game of cognitive perception and moral valuations between social actors takes place, always in contact with each other, so he endorses Kemper's postulate that Emotions arise in the social relationship.

leads to curtail its origin and leads to unreliable results, especially when it comes to analyzing its impact on society (Mercadillo, 2016)¹¹ because as this author points out, physical and social environments enter through our senses building experiences that are always mediated by the body (p. 550). Notwithstanding this agreement, the way in which the corporal, the emotional and the sensory are related, is currently still in dispute.

From the neurosciences, the debate forks in two positions: the centralist posture led by Rolls (2005) and the peripheral posture represented by Damasio (2015a; 2016) which, like the enactists (theorists of the New Cognitive Science), postulates the importance of the peripheral nervous system in the origin of the emotions and the role that these have in the processes of cognition¹². This is the position with which our point of view is identified, which is articulated with what Maturana (2015) and Bericat (2016) articulate when holding that thinking and feeling are two intertwined aspects that make up the same cognitive phenomenon, although This is not always aware¹³.

Phenomenology, on the other hand, understands perception as a direct, first-person cognition, which configures sensitive and intellectual experiences (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2013). Merleau-Ponty (2008, p. 20) has argued in this regard that the world, as captured from lived experience, is accessible precisely through our body, that is, through the human attributes that make the world precisely a mixture of spirit and body (p. 25). The French phenomenologist points out that the qualities of the world can only be understood in the relationship between the incarnate self and the world (p. 29) because the world itself manifests itself through perception (p. 60). In this way, perception summons the emotionality present in the body, originated and felt by it, from a cognitive imprint that is unavoidable.

This is what the enactists refer to when they argue that knowledge is action in the world (Bedia and Castillo, 2010, p. 110). Therefore they start from the fact that cognition is not a representation of a world pre-given by a pre-given mind (which fractures the argument of Rolls's centralist approach), but rather of "the putting into work of a world and a mind from the variety of actions that a being performs in the world "(p. 110). As Varela (2005) points out in this regard, the discovery of previously elaborated rules cannot annul the context or situationality in which perception occurs from its various sensory-motor skills, which leads the Enactists to say that these skills are found. inscribed both in a biological-psychological and historical-social and cultural context.

Thus, cognition does not result from the processing of information and symbolic manipulation, as it is intended from the representationalist or connectionist theories of cognitive science from which the centralist perspective drinks, for example. From the enactist

¹¹ This in no case encourages a deterministic conception of emotions. As the author himself states, precisely the living, biological process, of which emotions are part, breaks with a deterministic interpretation (2016, p. 549) since the always active dynamics of the brain, depending on its neuronal system, its physiology and synaptic communication that occurs in it, always takes place in context, as the enactists point out, which are called researchers of the New Cognitive Science.

¹² This is contrary to Rolls's (2005) approaches since this author places rationality in the higher functions of the mind, denying the possibility of emotional cognition from the body itself, that is, from the sensory organs that are both Damasio as for the enactists and phenomenologists, from where all perception begins, all cognition.

¹³ Although we start from the positions of Damasio, we must say that from Rolls's point of view emotions are subjective states triggered by situations of reward and punishment. The author treats emotions as what appears in certain situations to guide the action. The presence of an environment external to the individual, his body and his mind is necessary, because for the author the emotions develop via associative learning. Thus, emotions are something conscious of the mind and cognition. Therefore, from this perspective it is not possible to feel an emotion without consciously linking it to the external situation that has unleashed it; Hence, emotion reduces its role to serve as a platform for action and not for awareness itself. Rolls denies the internal cognitive role of emotions as an informant of the states of the body, which is called into question by phenomenology, the New Cognitive Science and also by peripheral neurobiology of Antonio Damasio.

approach that coincides here, there is no external world modeled outside our experiences. The objective world that expects to be “recovered” or “captured” is a fallacy that fuels the mistaken separation of the mind-body unit. The world exists and nobody doubts it, but access to it - which is the knowledge we invoice about it - is a subjective and intersubjective issue that is linked to the processes of perception where cognition takes place. As we do not know outside of perception, we do not know outside the experience lived, bodily, emotionally and rationally given from our sensomotor system, with its scope and limits.

From the neurobiology of Damasio the union between emotion and rationality allows the brain to be informed of the states of the body through sensations; that is why an emotion is always rational, although not always consciously significant. For the Portuguese neurobiologist, the sensation is inscribed through the sensory organs in the peripheral nervous system and this emotionally informs what happens in our body as long as it is connected to the emotional system or limbic brain (integrated to the central nervous system) (Damasio, 2000, 2015a). This explains the impossibility of disarticulating the sensation-emotion unit and the impossibility of separating from that unit the processes of cognition that always take place in the experience, that is, in the acts of interaction or encounter, historically situated, of the individual with the world and with the other individuals. As Bedia and Castillo (2010, p. 111) affirm, to think otherwise is to reproduce an incorrect conception: body-mind separation.

3.2 The Emotional-Rationality Unit and Its Impact on Social Interaction

With regard to the above, Moreno (2014) emphasizes that the thesis of shock with the world is overcome by understanding that the body is not a definitive or immutable structure or a machine controlled by the mind, but the center of formation of our cognitive abilities in its relationship of significance with the medium in / with which it interacts. As postulated from enactment, the body is the sensory-motor structure that originates the understanding of incarnate action; In this way, as Moreno suggests (2014), the possibilities of action of all human beings are determined by the history of the structural links between the body and the environment through experience. This is why Di Paolo (2015) argues that cognition is indissoluble from the individual's body history, where world and mind specify each other.

Understanding that perception is an action guided by the recurrence of sensory-motor schemes as self-organized processes from which incarnated cognitive structures emerge (Moreno, 2014), it seems clear that the need to create and maintain strategies to preserve such self-organization not only prevents the disintegration of living organisms (Maturana and Varela, 2009), but also makes them worry about the world, meaning it (Jonas, 2017)¹⁴. This helps to understand the agency of individuals as a mechanism for regulating their sensomotor interactions with the environment, having as a stage of significance the conservation of physical identity (Di Paolo, 2015). Thus it is understood that there is no action outside cognition¹⁵.

¹⁴ The sense of mortality and precarious existence (concepts that are owed to Jonas) makes the enactmentists put adaptability at the center of their reflections as a capacity of all living beings, but especially of human beings who, In addition, we have not only internal memory but also the so-called extended memory in culture, as well as our ability to imagine and think in advance, thus responding adaptively to unforeseen circumstances.

¹⁵ The New Cognitive Science has thus given birth to a theory of human subjectivity that, in the words of Froes (2016), does justice to both our lived (subjective) existence and our living (objective) existence. Therefore, as this author points out, it is precisely our mortality that makes us organizations interested in the world and others, and consequently that makes us pay attention to the regulation of our social interactions, where emotion also enters. We perceive the world and our self as the center of the identity of the self; and therefore these processes form the basis of the processes of cognition that occur from the body through

In that sense, social interaction refers to processes of perception and experience of and among social actors, which is why it is always the result, although not only, of the perceptions and representations (in which emotion plays) that we make of each other, the world and the concrete circumstances in which these emerge and "go out" to meet us. Therefore, it is important not to avoid the epistemological problem posed by the need to understand the ontology of social reality (Zemelman, 2009) and that impacts Social Sciences in general.

IV. Conclusion

As Caneda (2014) points out, in sociology, the human being is mostly thought of as a bodyless consciousness, which is what seems to be affirmed from a conception of emotion as a sociocultural construction, which does not grant the body or the potential transformative emotion some (p. 15). To put it with Morin (1978), this prevents placing the biological human being in sociology, resulting in the impossibility of fully understanding the functioning of society, not from Foucault's (2009) positions on the control and domestication of bodies and affections - which is somehow the imprint of reflection and current research in the sociology of emotions - but in terms of recovering the subjective experience in its anatomical, neural, sensitive, cognitive, affective and symbolic complexity of the human being, and its impact on the constitution of social relations.

As Mead (1999) stated, the biological subject and the social subject are not two separate entities, which does not imply ignoring - from Foucaultian heritage - that the body is socially disciplined (Douglas, 1988), although it does imply that the body is the place of being and the appropriation of the world, as Merleau-Ponty rightly points out (2002; 2008). Leys (2011) points out that the Cartesian division between body and mind unfortunately dominates even in the theory of affections, which is reproduced from the belief that the individual's inner life is outside the social articulation (Martin, 2013).

The program of the sociology of emotions, as well as studies on the body and sensory studies, rehearse failed approaches when it comes to analyzing the overlap between perception-emotion and society because they start from understanding individuals from their condition as subject subjects, and not of actors with agency and transforming capacity. This finds difficulties in explaining social transformation in general and in a concrete way the way in which emotion is socially constructed (not only collectively but within the structures of domination), without underestimating that the social influences the construction of emotions to individual and collective level.

Understanding the weight of emotions in the social field requires questioning the very reality of the emotional experience from its subjective constitution, centered on the individual who is excited and excited. This would imply a review of what emotion is, as a homeostatic mechanism for our vital functioning, allowing us to really understand the influence of the social structure in the configuration of emotional effects at the collective level, and the no less influence of individual emotions in the configuration and historical constitution of the social order.

sensations. This explains the fact that the other is always veiled in the representation by self-reference (Simmel, 2014), which after all said, it is clear that it cannot be otherwise.

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